Maybrat is a Papuan language which is spoken in the central area of the Bird's Head. The total number of speakers is approximately 22,000 (Brown 1991:1). Maybrat has originally been classified as a family-level isolate of the West Papuan Phylum (Voorhoeve 1987a:717), but subsequent research has indicated that this classification may well be untenable (Reesink 1996). The name Maybrat is morphologically a compound noun, consisting of two members. The first is *may*, a noun meaning 'sound'. The second part, *brat*, seems to refer to the type of sound, in other words, the particular language variety. However, in isolation the form *brat* is unattested. The people who speak Maybrat refer to themselves as *rae ro Maybrat*, lit. 'man REL 'sound *brat*". Maybrat is spoken in six dialects, namely *Mayhapeh*, *Mayasmaun*, *Karon*, *Maymare*, *Maymaru* and *Mayte*. Speakers of these dialects all refer to themselves as *rae ro Maybrat*.

Previous work on Maybrat includes work by the anthropologists J.-E. Elmberg and H. Schoorl, and by the linguist B. Brown. Both Elmberg and Brown worked in the Ayamaru area, while Schoorl worked in the Ayfat area. A complete grammar in the form of a PhD thesis was completed in 1999 by the present author. Apart from a grammar and texts, this work also gives the background information and references on previous research on the Maybrat.

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